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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 06 HARARE 001270

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

AIDAC

STATE FOR AF/S FOR KRAFT AND DELISI

BRUSSELS FOR USEU

USAID/W FOR AFR/SA POE, WILLIAMS AND COPSON; AFR/SD FOR
WHELAN; DCHA/FFP FOR PETERSEN, SKORIC AND BRAUSE; BHR/OFDA
FOR BRYAN, HANDAGLE AND MARX
GENEVA PLEASE PASS TO UNOCHA, IFRC

ROME PLEASE PASS TO FODAG

NAIROBI PLEASE PASS TO USAID/REDSO/FFP AND OFDA/ARO

PRETORIA PLEASE PASS TO USDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MAY 23 U.N.-SPONSORED DIALOGUE WITH FINANCE
MINISTER MAKONI ON FOOD POLICY

REF: (A) HARARE 1141, (B) 01 HARARE 3753

THIS MESSAGE IS UNCLASSIFIED BUT SENSITIVE AND NOT SUITABLE
FOR INTERNET DISSEMINATION.

SUMMARY

1. ON MAY 23, UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (UNDP)
RESIDENT COORDINATOR (RESREP) J. VICTOR ANGELO HOSTED AN
"INFORMAL" MEETING WITH SENIOR-LEVEL GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE
(GOZ) OFFICIALS, REPRESENTATIVES OF MOST RESIDENT MISSIONS
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
(OECD), AND SELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE SOUTHERN
AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) AND G-77 COUNTRIES TO
DISCUSS POLICY CONSTRAINTS PREVENTING AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE
TO ZIMBABWE'S SERIOUS FOOD CRISIS. ALTHOUGH THREE GOZ
MINISTERS WERE INVITED TO THE MEETING, ONLY FINANCE AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (MOF) MINISTER SIMBA MAKONI SHOWED UP.

2. FOLLOWING A BRIEF INTRODUCTION BY RESREP ANGELO, MINISTER
MAKONI PROCEEDED TO PROVIDE A SUMMARY REPORT OF THE CURRENT
COUNTRY SITUATION AND THE PLANNED GOZ RESPONSE. A
"DIALOGUE" ON POLICY ISSUES RELATED TO THE CRISIS AND
RESPONSE FOLLOWED. WHILE MINISTER MAKONI MADE A VALIANT
STAB AT DEFENDING OFTEN INDEFENSIBLE GOZ POLICIES, THE
MEETING UNDERScoreD PAST AND PRESENT GOVERNMENT PROBLEMS IN
WORKING WITH DONOR COUNTRIES. MAKONI'S GOOD INTENTIONS
ASIDE, THE MEETING PROVIDED LITTLE REASSURANCE THAT THERE IS
SUFFICIENT GOZ POLITICAL WILL TO ADDRESS THE SERIOUS ISSUES
SURROUNDING FOOD SECURITY IN A TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE MANNER.
SEPARATE, FOLLOWING CONVERSATIONS WITH RESREP ANGELO PROVIDED
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON HOW THE UN HOPES TO KEEP THE
INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE ON TRACK. END SUMMARY.

INTRODUCTION

3. OF THE THREE MINISTERS INVITED BY UNDP RESREP J. VICTOR
ANGELO TO THE "INFORMAL" MAY 23 MEETING ON FOOD ISSUES ONLY
MOF MINISTER SIMBA MAKONI SHOWED UP. PERMANENT SECRETARY
(PMS) MUSEKA OF THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, LABOR AND
SOCIAL WELFARE (M/SW) REPRESENTED MINISTER JULY MOYO; AND
MINISTER OF STATE SECURITY, NICHOLAS GOCHE, INVITED IN HIS
CAPACITY AS CHAIRMAN OF THE MAIZE IMPORT TASK FORCE, FAILED
TO SHOW UP DESPITE ANGELO'S EXPECTATION THAT HE WOULD BE
THERE. GOCHE'S ASSISTANT DID ARRIVE MID-MEETING TO SILENTLY
REPRESENT HIS MINISTER'S INTERESTS, IN THE LATTER'S ABSENCE.
END NOTE.

GOZ SITUATION UPDATE

4. FOLLOWING AN INTRODUCTION BY RESREP ANGELO, WHO STRESSED
THE CLOSED NATURE OF THE MEETING TO PROMOTE "FRANK"
DISCUSSION, MINISTER MAKONI THANKED THE DONOR COUNTRIES
PRESENT FOR ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO DATE IN RESPONSE TO
ZIMBABWE'S HUMANITARIAN CRISIS. NOTING THAT THIS WAS THE
THIRD SUCH MEETING ON THIS SUBJECT SINCE THE LAUNCH OF THE
U.N.'S HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE RELIEF PROGRAMME (HARP) FOR
ZIMBABWE IN DECEMBER 2001 (REFTEL B) THE MINISTER PROCEEDED
TO PROVIDE A SUMMARY REPORT OF THE CURRENT COUNTRY SITUATION

AND THE GOZ RESPONSE. HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED:

1A. TO DATE, THE GOZ HAS APPROVED A TOTAL OF 400,000 METRIC TONS (MT) OF MAIZE IMPORTS, OF WHICH APPROXIMATELY 240,000 MT HAS BEEN PURCHASED, WITH SOME 200,000 MT PROCURED FROM SOUTH AFRICA. FOREIGN EXCHANGE SHORTAGES HAVE IMPEDED THE COMPLETION OF THESE PROCUREMENTS, WITH MINISTER MAKONI NOTING THAT "WE ARE STILL TRYING TO FIND THE FUNDS" FOR THE REMAINDER OF THESE COMMERCIAL PURCHASES.

1B. APPROXIMATELY 140,000 MT (OF 240,000 MT) OF MAIZE PROCUREMENTS HAVE ARRIVED IN COUNTRY TO DATE, WITH DELIVERIES SUFFERING SERIOUS DELAYS DUE TO "BOTTLENECKS" THROUGHOUT THE FOOD IMPORT AND DISTRIBUTION TRANSPORT CHAIN, E.G., INSUFFICIENT RAIL CAPACITY, AND INSUFFICIENT DOMESTIC TRUCK TRANSPORT RESOURCES, BOTH FROM THE BORDER TO GRAIN MARKETING BOARD (GMB) DEPOTS AND FROM THE DEPOTS TO THE FINAL DISTRIBUTION SITES. MAKONI SAID THAT THERE WAS "TALK ABOUT" MOBILIZING ADDITIONAL PRIVATE TRANSPORT CAPACITY TO OVERCOME THESE CONSTRAINTS.

1C. THE NATIONAL CROP FORECASTING COMMITTEE ESTIMATED 600,000 MT OF MAIZE PRODUCTION THIS YEAR, LEAVING A 1.2 MILLION MT DEFICIT (FOR PROJECTED HUMAN CONSUMPTION). HE NOTED, HOWEVER, GOVERNMENT CONCERNS ABOUT THE RELIABILITY OF THIS ESTIMATE, SINCE "THE SYSTEM" HAD NOT YET ADJUSTED TO ACCOUNT FOR THE CHANGED AGRICULTURAL SITUATION, ESPECIALLY MAIZE PRODUCTION ON THE NEWLY RESETTLED "FAST-TRACK" LANDS. HE ALSO NOTED THAT FINAL FIGURES WERE EXPECTED BY END-MONTH. NOTE: FEWSNET HAS ALREADY PROVIDED A FINAL FIGURE FOR TOTAL MAIZE PRODUCTION OF 500,000 MT -- 100,000 MT LESS THAN MINISTER MAKONI'S ESTIMATE, WHICH WAS BASED ON THE CROP ASSESSMENT CONDUCTED TWO MONTHS AGO. THE JOINT FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATION AND WORLD FOOD PROGRAM FOOD AND CROP ASSESSMENT MISSION (REFTEL A) CONCLUDED EARLIER THIS MONTH SUPPORTS THE FEWSNET FIGURE. END NOTE.

1D. THE MINISTER PROCEEDED TO OUTLINE CURRENT GOZ PLANS FOR ADDRESSING THIS SITUATION THROUGH AN AMBITIOUS PROGRAM TARGETING 7.8 MILLION ZIMBABWEANS FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE OVER 18 MONTHS. THE MAJOR PROGRAM COMPONENTS WOULD INCLUDE CASH-FOR-WORK (Z\$1,500/HOUSEHOLD/MONTH) FOR THE ABLE-BODIED, TARGETED FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED, AND SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS OF AGE (TWO KILOGRAMS (KG.) OF "NUTRIMEAL" FOR EACH CHILD PER MONTH) AND THREE KG/CHILD/MONTH FOR SOME OF THE MOST NEEDY CHILDREN UNDER NINE YEARS OF AGE.

1E. STATING THAT FOOD IMPORT REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS PROGRAM WOULD COST Z\$31 BILLION OVER 12 MONTHS FROM THE BEGINNING OF THIS CALENDAR YEAR (DECEMBER 2001), MAKONI NOTED THAT ONLY Z\$20.7 BILLION WOULD BE REQUIRED FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS CALENDAR YEAR (TO DECEMBER 2002), ALLOWING FOR THE FUNDS/TIME WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN ACCOUNTED FOR SINCE JANUARY. NOTE: THESE FIGURES ARE MUCH LOWER THAN THOSE FROM AN APRIL GOZ DRAFT STRATEGY PAPER, WHICH PROJECTED Z\$102 BILLION FOR FOOD REQUIREMENTS OVER 18 MONTHS. END NOTE. THE MINISTER ADDED THAT THE GOZ WAS REVIEWING HOW TO FIT THESE REQUIREMENTS INTO THE CURRENT YEAR'S BUDGET. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT INTERNATIONAL DONOR SUPPORT WOULD BE REQUIRED, HE GAVE THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THE MAJORITY COULD BE MET FROM THE GOVERNMENT BUDGET, IN COMBINATION WITH THIS YEAR'S HARVEST. HE CONCLUDED THAT NEXT YEAR'S FOOD REQUIREMENTS WOULD BE INCLUDED IN NEXT YEAR'S BUDGET (OCTOBER/NOVEMBER, AND WOULD DEPEND ON THE FINAL CROP PRODUCTION ESTIMATE, NEXT YEAR'S RAINFALL, AND OTHER SALIENT FACTORS.

15. PMS MUSEKA FOLLOWED MINISTER MAKONI, BRIEFLY ELABORATING ON THE CURRENT SERIOUS CONSTRAINTS THE PROGRAM WAS FACING, SUCH AS THE "ACUTE TRANSPORT PROBLEM" (INSUFFICIENT CAPACITY AND/OR FUNDS TO HIRE TRUCKS), STAFFING CONSTRAINTS (BOTH FOR FOOD DISTRIBUTIONS AND CASH-FOR-WORK PROGRAMS), FUNDING CONSTRAINTS (LIMITING THE "POPULAR" CASH-FOR-WORK PROGRAM, AND NOTING SEVERAL INSTANCES WHERE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS HAD NOT BEEN PAID FOR COMPLETED WORK). MUSEKA ALSO NOTED THE INADEQUACY OF OLD AND UNRELIABLE CENSUS DATA, WHICH MADE PROGRAM DESIGN AND TARGETING DIFFICULT. THE PERMSEC ALSO NOTED THE GROWING PROBLEM OF DISPLACED FARM WORKERS BECAUSE OF THE ON-GOING FAST-TRACK LAND REDISTRIBUTION EXERCISE.

"POLICY DIALOGUE"

16. RESREP ANGELO OPENED THE FLOOR FOR QUESTIONS. THE FOLLOWING ISSUES WERE RAISED: FOOD DISTRIBUTION "PROBLEMS"; PARTISAN DISTRIBUTION OF RELIEF ASSISTANCE; THE COMMUNICATIONS/DIALOGUE "GAP" BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND DONOR COUNTRIES; PRIVATE SECTOR AND NGO PARTICIPATION IN THE CRISIS; THE IMPACT OF PRICE CONTROLS AND THE EXCHANGE RATE ON THE PROVISION OF FOOD RELIEF; THE IMPACT OF THE FAST-TRACK EXERCISE ON THE CURRENT FOOD/AGRICULTURAL SITUATION; CLARIFICATION OF THE COUNTRY FOOD SITUATION; FOOD TRADE/SALES/MARKETING RESTRICTIONS; (COMMERCIAL) FARMING ASSURANCES/SECURITY; PRICE CONTROLS; THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE REGIME; AND RESTRICTIONS ON THE IMPORT AND DISTRIBUTION OF

FOOD COMMODITIES CONTAINING GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS (GMO). THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT 10,00 MT OF AMERICAN MAIZE WERE DIVERTED TO OTHER SOUTH AFRICAN COUNTRIES BECAUSE OF ZIMBABWE'S FAILURE TO WAIVE GMO RESTRICTIONS. HE STATED THAT CONTINUATION OF GMO RESTRICTIONS WOULD SEVERELY LIMIT USG ABILITY TO HELP.

17. MAKONI RESPONDED BY DENYING KNOWLEDGE OF A COMMUNICATION GAP, CITING PAST INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP MEETINGS ON THIS SUBJECT, AND ASSURING DONORS OF HIS CONTINUING WILLINGNESS TO MEET AT ANY TIME TO DISCUSS THE ISSUES NOTED ABOVE WITH DONOR COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES.

18. ON THE ISSUE OF POLITICAL DISCRIMINATION IN FOOD/RELIEF PROGRAMS, THE MINISTER STATED THAT HE HAD HEARD ALLEGATIONS BUT WAS UNAWARE OF ANY ACTUAL INCIDENTS OF SUCH ABUSE. HE SAID THAT SPECIFIC INFORMATION (NAMES, NUMBERS, LOCATIONS, ETC.) WOULD BE NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM; GENERAL ALLEGATIONS WERE NOT USEFUL. HE STRESSED THAT LOCAL NGOS, TRADITIONAL LEADERS, AND OTHERS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION HAD NOT REPORTED SUCH INCIDENTS IN RESPONSE TO HIS OWN HOME-DISTRICT QUERIES ON THE ALLEGATIONS. THIS INFORMATION LED HIM TO QUESTION THE EXTENT OF THIS PROBLEM - HE UNDERScoreD THAT THIS TYPE OF ABUSE IS NOT SOMETHING THAT HAPPENS IN ZIMBABWEAN SOCIETY, IN THAT IT IS CULTURALLY UNACCEPTABLE (A SINGULARLY CURIOUS STATEMENT, FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW). HOWEVER, HE WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT ANY PROBLEM SO THAT IT COULD BE PROMPTLY. PMS MUSEKA SECONDED MAKONI'S STATEMENTS, REITERATING THAT IT WAS THE COMMUNITIES THEMSELVES THAT MADE BENEFICIARY DECISIONS AND IMPLEMENTED THE PROGRAM. HE ADDED THAT HIS MINISTRY HAD RECEIVED NO REPORTS OF SUCH ABUSE TO DATE AND, THEREFORE, HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT "THE SYSTEM IS WORKING WELL."

19. THE MINISTER SUGGESTED THAT THE CONSTRAINTS ON PRIVATE SECTOR ACCESS AND INVOLVEMENT WERE MORE ARTIFICIAL THAN ACTUAL, CITING SEVERAL POSITIVE STEPS IN THIS AREA. THESE INCLUDED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PRIVATE SECTOR TRUST FUND BY LOCAL BUSINESSES TO ASSIST THE RELIEF EFFORT, AND THE REMOVAL OF ANY DUTY ON GRAIN IMPORTS (INCLUDING 25 PERCENT DUTY FOR NON-SADC IMPORTS). HE ADDED THAT THE STATUTORY INSTRUMENT BANNING PRIVATE SECTOR IMPORTS/SALES OF BASIC CEREALS WAS, IN REALITY, BEING IGNORED, CITING NUMEROUS INDIVIDUAL INSTANCES WHERE IMPORT PERMITS HAD BEEN GRANTED TO PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPLIERS. HE STATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE TO DEAL FAVORABLY WITH SUCH PRIVATE SECTOR REQUESTS "PRACTICALLY", ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS, AS OPPOSED TO GETTING BOGGED DOWN IN POLITICS BY ATTEMPTING TO CHANGE FORMAL LEGISLATION OR POLICY ON THIS SUBJECT (WHICH IS CLEARLY BEYOND HIS POWER TO DO). PRESSED, MAKONI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS PRIVATE SECTOR RELIEF APPLIED ONLY TO PRIVATE SECTOR IMPORTS FOR DONATIONS TO THEIR OWN EMPLOYEES AND HAD NO RELEVANCE TO PRIVATE SECTOR IMPORTS FOR MARKET SALES, WHICH WERE IMPRACTICAL, GIVEN THE LOW FIXED PRICE FOR MAIZE MEAL.

110. ON THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE RATE, MAKONI LARGELY REITERATED WHAT WE ALL ALREADY KNEW - WHILE HE WAS ATTEMPTING TO ADDRESS IT, THIS WAS A DIFFICULT POLITICAL ISSUE WHICH WAS BEYOND HIS POWER ALONE TO CORRECT. WHILE HE REMAINED OPTIMISTIC, NO RESOLUTION HAD YET BEEN CONCLUDED ON THIS ISSUE. THE MINISTER ALSO NOTED HIS CONCERNS REGARDING THE MEDIA'S TREATMENT OF THESE ISSUES AS ONLY SERVING TO EXACERBATE PROBLEMS AND MAKE HIS ATTEMPTS TO ADDRESS THEM MORE DIFFICULT.

111. ON THE ISSUE OF PRICE CONTROLS, THE MINISTER REITERATED THE SAME GENERAL LINE. CITING SEVERAL RECENT INSTANCES WHERE PRICES ON BASIC GOODS AND SERVICES HAD BEEN ADJUSTED, HE ENCOURAGED REPORTING/PRESENTATION OF COMMODITY-SPECIFIC INSTANCES OF PROBLEMS THAT COULD BE DEALT WITH ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS (AS OPPOSED TO FORMALLY CHANGING THE RELEVANT LAWS OR POLICIES ON THIS SUBJECT). HE EXPRESSED HIS WILLINGNESS TO ATTEMPT TO DEAL WITH ANY SUCH SPECIFIC INSTANCES AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE.

112. MAKONI ACKNOWLEDGED A "DOWNSIDE TO MAJOR AGRARIAN REFORM" - THE FAST TRACK PROGRAM -- IN ZIMBABWE OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS. HE CONCEDED THAT DISTURBANCES ON FARMS RESULTING FROM FAST TRACK WERE AT LEAST PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CURRENT FOOD CRISIS. NOTING THAT THE LAND REDISTRIBUTION PROGRAM WAS NOW ALMOST COMPLETE, HE URGED ASSISTANCE TO ALL FARMERS -- INCLUDING FAST-TRACK RESETTLERS -- TO STIMULATE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. HE FURTHER URGED THE DONORS TO "FORGET ABOUT HOW/WHY WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE", THAT "WE MUST WORK WITHIN THE CURRENT REALITY," THAT THERE WAS NO BENEFIT TO BE DERIVED FROM "RE-HASHING OLD ISSUES", AND THAT WE SHOULD, THEREFORE, "GET ON WITH WHAT'S LEFT."

113. ON FARMER SECURITY/ASSURANCES, THE MINISTER NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS ENCOURAGING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN RESPONSE TO THE GROWING FOOD CRISIS. HE CHARACTERIZED THE CURRENT FARMING SITUATION AS "IN TRANSITION", WITH GOVERNMENT NOW TRYING TO "REGULARIZE" FAST TRACK AND THUS ENSURE FARM/ER SECURITY. HE STATED HIS BELIEF THAT THE SECURITY SITUATION ON COMMERCIAL FARMS HAD IMPROVED OVER THE

PAST FIVE WEEKS; BUT ALSO THAT FOR A PROGRAM OF THIS MAGNITUDE, SUCH ACTIONS TAKE TIME.

¶14. HE ACKNOWLEDGED HAVING HEARD OF THE GMO ISSUE BUT EXPRESSED IGNORANCE ABOUT THE TECHNICAL SPECIFICS. HE PLANNED TO CONVENE A MEETING WITH THE BIO-SAFETY BOARD (THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR GOVERNMENT POLICY ON GMOS) IN AN ATTEMPT TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE. HE SUGGESTED THAT ONE POSSIBLE CONCERN WAS THE POTENTIAL IMPACT ON BEEF EXPORTS TO CERTAIN TRADING PARTNERS (THE EUROPEAN UNION) FROM GMO-FED LIVESTOCK. NOTE: MISSION/WFP HAS INFORMATION THAT STRONGLY SUGGESTS THAT GMO-FED LIVESTOCK IS NOT A SIGNIFICANT ISSUE FOR THE EU/EC. END NOTE. THE MINISTER EXPRESSED THE NEED FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN THIS ISSUE TO COORDINATE. WHILE ADMITTING THE GOZ'S ATTENTION TO THIS ISSUE CAME LATE, HE CONCLUDED WITH "BETTER LATE THAN NEVER."

¶15. AMBASSADOR SULLIVAN'S REQUESTED CLARIFICATION ON THE CURRENT FOOD SITUATION -- INITIALLY, MINISTER MAKONI APPEARED TO SUGGEST THAT THE NATION'S FOOD NEEDS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS CALENDAR YEAR COULD ADEQUATELY BE MET FROM GOVERNMENT IMPORTS AND THIS YEAR'S HARVEST (STRONGLY IMPLYING THAT NO INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE WOULD BE REQUIRED, AT LEAST OVER THIS PERIOD). HOWEVER, IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC FOLLOW-UP QUERIES ON THIS SUBJECT BY THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER, THE MINISTER RETRACTED THIS POSITION, STATING, "OF COURSE WE WILL NEED INTERNATIONAL/EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE." HE HAD APPARENTLY DOUBTED-COUNTED PURCHASES MADE THIS YEAR, THEREBY MAXIMIZING GOZ RESOURCES. ADDITIONAL ATTEMPTS TO CLARIFY THE FIGURES SPAWNED CONFUSION, WITH THE MINISTER FINALLY STATING THAT HE WOULD NEED TO "REVIEW THE FIGURES", AND THAT HE WOULD GET BACK TO THE AUDIENCE WITH THE CORRECT POSITION ON THIS SUBJECT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

¶16. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING, THE MALAWIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO NOTE THE GREATER REGIONAL NATURE OF THE PROBLEM. SHE HIGHLIGHTED HER OWN COUNTRY'S DESPERATE SITUATION, CITING ONE PRESS REPORT INDICATING THAT ONE IN FIVE MALAWIANS WERE UNDER SEVERE THREAT OF DYING FROM STARVATION. SHE EXPRESSED HER COUNTRY'S GRATITUDE FOR DONOR ASSISTANCE PLEDGED/PROVIDED TO DATE, AND ENDORSED THIS TYPE OF CONSULTATIVE EXCHANGE AS THE ONLY WAY TO PROPERLY ADDRESS A SERIOUS CRISIS OF THIS SCOPE AND MAGNITUDE.

¶17. AT A PRIVATE LUNCH IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE MEETING, UNDP RESREP ANGELO ELABORATED ON A FEW OF MAKONI'S REMARKS AND TOOK ABOARD A FEW SUGGESTIONS FROM THE AMBASSADOR ON POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CONVERSATION INCLUDED:

-- THE AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR THE UN TO ORGANIZE FIELD VISITS BY DIPLOMATS AND INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISTS TO FOOD DISTRIBUTION SITES, BOTH TO PUBLICIZE THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM AND TO DISCOURAGE ANY TEMPTATION FOR ANYONE TO MANIPULATE FOOD DISTRIBUTION FOR POLITICAL ENDS. ANGELO AGREED THAT DIPLOMATIC VISITS WERE DESIRABLE BUT OPINED THAT JOURNALISTS WOULD BE MORE COMFORTABLE FENDING FOR THEMSELVES. THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE MEDIA BE ALLOWED TO VIEW THE SITUATION CLOSE UP.

-- THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED THAT THE PRESENCE OF INDEPENDENT MONITORS OF WFP FOOD AID WOULD SERVE TO LIMIT GOZ PARANOIA AND TAKE A BURDEN OFF THE UN. HE SAID THAT HE WAS CERTAIN THAT DONOR SUPPORT FOR SUCH AN EFFORT WOULD BE FORTHCOMING. ANGELO ACCEPTED THAT SGS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTING ORGANIZATIONS WOULD BE WELL PLACED TO TACKLE SUCH AN ASSIGNMENT.

-- THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT THE CREDIBILITY OF THE RELIEF EFFORT DEPENDED UPON STRAIGHTFORWARD PRESENTATION OF THE FACTS, INCLUDING THE CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM. IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT FLAWED GOZ POLICIES, AND NOT JUST DROUGHT, HAD CONTRIBUTED TO THE CRISIS. ANGELO AGREED.

-- ANGELO SAID THAT THE GOZ HAS FINALLY TAKEN THE LID OFF THE PLIGHT OF FARM WORKERS. A UNDP TEAM IS CURRENTLY IN THE FIELD ATTEMPTING TO TAKE THE MEASURE OF THIS VERY COMPLICATED SITUATION. HE HOPED TO HAVE A CLEARER PICTURE OF NUMBERS, LOCATIONS, AND NEEDS SOON.

-- ANGELO SAID THAT THE UNSYG HAD MET WITH MUGABE TWICE DURING MUGABE'S RECENT VISIT TO NEW YORK. THE FIRST MEETING FOCUSED ON TECHNICAL/HUMANITARIAN ISSUES, WITH MUGABE APPEARING LARGELY BLANK ON THE DIMENSIONS OF THE FOOD CRISIS DESPITE THE FACT THAT NIGERIAN MEDIATOR ADEDEJI HAD GIVEN HIM A PAPER (DRAFTED BY ANGELO) DESCRIBING THE SITUATION. MUGABE PAID LIP SERVICE TO RETURNING TO ABUJA, BUT LITTLE ELSE. THE SECOND MEETING FOCUSED ON THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AND WAS SINGULARLY UNPRODUCTIVE. MUGABE FEIGNED SURPRISE THAT THE INTER-PARTY TALKS, WHICH HE TERMED AS "TECHNICAL," HAD COLLAPSED AND SAID THAT THIS INITIATIVE WAS THE CONCERN

OF HIS SUBORDINATES AND THAT HE WAS NOT INVOLVED.

COMMENT

118. MAKONI MADE HIS USUAL VALIANT EFFORT TO DEFEND OFTEN INDEFENSIBLE GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND ACTIONS VIS A VIS THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS. HOWEVER, THE MEETING MOSTLY UNDERSCORED PAST AND PRESENT GOVERNMENT PROBLEMS IN WORKING WITH DONOR COUNTRIES INVOLVED. THE RECURRING PROBLEMS OF RELATIVE PRIORITIES, INTERMINISTERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY, AND POLITICAL INTRANSIGENCE ALL MANIFESTED THEMSELVES IN VARIOUS STAGES OF THE PROCEEDINGS. MAKONI HAS NEVER BEEN THE PROBLEM, NOR THROUGH ANY FAULT OF HIS OWN THE FIX, BUT DESPITE HIS BEST INTENTIONS THE OUTCOME OF THE MEETING WAS LESS THAN SATISFACTORY. INDIVIDUAL CASE-SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS WILL SIMPLY NOT SUFFICE IN ADDRESSING A CRISIS OF THIS MAGNITUDE, DEMANDS SERIOUS POLICY REFORM ARE REQUIRED. THE FINANCE MINISTER'S APPARENT CONFUSION OVER ACTUAL COUNTRY NEEDS AND DONOR REQUIREMENTS WAS PARTICULARLY DISTRESSING IN THE CONTEXT OF A NATIONAL FOOD CRISIS OF HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS. IT PROVIDED LITTLE REASSURANCE THAT THE POLITICAL WILL AND WHEREWITHALL EXIST WITHIN GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THESE SERIOUS POLICY CONCERNS IN A TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE MANNER. HIS "LET BYGONES BE BYGONES" RHETORIC, IMPLYING THAT THE DONORS SHOULD SUFFER COLLECTIVE AMNESIA ABOUT THE ABUSIVE GOZ LAND GRAB PRESENTLY ONGOING, AND GET ON WITH FORKING OVER TO THE GOZ WHAT IT THINKS IT NEEDS TO REBUILD THE COUNTRY ANEW IN ITS OWN ZANU-PF IMAGE, MERITS NO FURTHER COMMENT.

SULLIVAN